

A bright, cheery expanse greets your eyes as you step through the door of the Ogemaw District Library in Rose City. To the left you can almost always find young people searching the racks for reading material, of which there is plenty; or listening to one of the audio visual devices available. To your immediate right is the reading table, located conveniently nearby the magazine and newspaper rack. Here, you will also find the computer with which the library is interlinked with other libraries throughout the state. Directly ahead of you stands the check-out desk manned by friendly, helpful library personnel. To the right of the desk is the catalog rack for videos to loan. Down the long hall stand the racks of reference and fiction and non-fiction publications. Off to the right are the reference rooms and meeting rooms.

What the average library user sees today is a far cry from the library's noble beginnings. Originally housed in the Rose City Junior High School library, a group of citizens took it upon itself to establish a separate identity for the library and to seek a location more centrally located to the public with additional business hours. To these people a great debt is owed, for the effort was arduous, requiring many public meetings and contacts with representatives of the State Library in Lansing.

In October of 1976 the hard work bore fruit and the participating townships appointed their first library board. CUMMING TWP. appointed Carolyn Thompson (elected Treasurer) and Russell Mason (elected president); GOODAR TWP. appointed Faye Peters and Murray Bledsoe; HILL TWP. appointed Delores Miller and Art Short; KLACKING TWP. appointed Debra Thomas and Kathryn Fritz; ROSE TWP. appointed Dorothy Bailer and Mary Ann McKellar (elected Secretary) and ROSE CITY appointed Delores VanCamp (elected Vice president) and Marvel Feldtmose.

The building which now houses the library began as a "loan" for six months by its owner, Jack Gifford. In August 1977, the Library Board made the decision to purchase the building. Since that time, serious renovation has made the library what it is today.

January 12, 1977 brought librarian Barbara Sanback into place as the first librarian. She began with 1500 books, existing library supplies and bookcases that were moved to the new location from the school. It was just enough to fill the front two rooms of the building. Still, it was enough to impress township officials and Senator Bob Young who attended an open house on January 30th, the day before the library officially opened its doors to the public.

Many board members over the course of time will tell you that money was tight in those early days. There were even times when the board was not certain if the library would be able to stay open as many hours as was hoped. As things progressed, however, organizations began to donate funds and materials. The Community Club, VFW, VFW Auxiliary, Lions, Lionesses, church groups, and other local organizations, as well as the State Library and White Pine Co-operative all made wonderful contributions to the growth of the library. Donations continue throughout the year from civic organizations and ~~~ memorials

The Ogemaw District Library has expanded beginning in 1982. Originally operated as a "book-mobile" service in Prescott, under the direction and mighty effort of Librarian Lealla Gawne it soon became a full-service branch - The Ogemaw East Branch Library in August of that year. Nine years later the Skidway Branch of the Ogemaw District Library was established. Services and facilities in all three branches are constantly expanding as



well Along with the annual summer reading program for children, one can find various exhibits and demonstrations of interest to everyone from time to time. In addition, one can find videos, audio cassettes, large print books and the Internet. The library is currently seeking ways to become automated so that all three libraries will be connected. Efforts are being made through a local citizen to establish a local access site for the Internet. The Lion's Club has donated a machine that will enlarge print onto a television screen.

In January of 1996, after 19 years of service, Barb Sanback, and Lealla Gawne, with 14 years service, both retired. Both ladies are to be commended for their tireless efforts to improve their respective libraries, to say nothing of the many extra hours they put in to make the dream come true.

Shortly after Barb's retirement, Jeanette Nathan took over directorship of the Rose City library and Sharon Arndt became the branch librarian at the Ogemaw East Branch. Sherri Pavlik became the branch librarian at Skidway Lake. As some things change, some things remain the same. Members of the present board find the names of some of the original board among them. Rose Twp. Sharon Alderton; Cummings Twp. Russ Mason (president) and Nancy McIntyre; Hill Twp. Herb Knuth (vice president); Klacking Twp. Debbi Thomas (treasurer) and Donna Fritz; Rose City Sandy Bean (secretary).

The library owes a great debt to the many people who have served on the board over the years. Many names do not appear in this article that, rightfully should. To them we tip our hats. Above all else, the library would not be what it is today without the continued support of the community.